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# U.S. to Miss Chemical Weapons Convention Deadline

ARMS CONTROL TODAY

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Following completion of an internal review, the Defense Department approved a new schedule September 26 for eliminating the U.S. chemical weapons stockpile that increases cost estimates and misses a Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) deadline for destroying weapons holdings by April 2007.

The Pentagon ordered the internal review in July 2000, after initial U.S. efforts to destroy its chemical weapons took longer than preliminary calculations had suggested. Delays were caused by a variety of problems, such as the stringency of new environmental regulations and the technical difficulty of draining agents from old chemical weapons, according to Greg Mahall, a spokesman for the Army's Program Manager for Chemical Demilitarization (PMCD), the office that conducts U.S. chemical weapons destruction activities.

The board conducting the review was ordered to assess the status of "all aspects" of the U.S. chemical weapons destruction program, including CWC compliance and cost estimates. An examination of the costs and time frame for U.S. implementation of the CWC was last conducted in 1998. The CWC outlaws chemical weapons possession and use and requires member states to destroy their weapons holdings.

The newly approved schedule consists of two sets of dates recommended by two groups that sat on the review board: PMCD and the Cost Analysis Improvement Group, an independent body composed of staff from the Office of the Secretary of Defense. Undersecretary of Defense Edward Aldridge, head of the U.S. chemical demilitarization effort, okayed PMCD's timeline as the Army's primary goal and the Improvement Group's schedule as a worst-case scenario.

The PMCD schedule calls for finishing destruction work two years after the CWC's 2007 deadline, but the treaty allows this deadline to be extended until 2012. This new schedule adds approximately two to four years to the 1998 estimate of when each U.S. demilitarization site will complete its destruction activity.

PMCD estimates the destruction program's life-cycle cost at $20 billion, up from a $15.3 billion 1998 estimate. Original forecasts in 1985, when the United States aimed to destroy its nearly 30,000-metric-ton arsenal by 1994, placed this cost at $1.5 billion.

The Improvement Group's schedule and cost estimates factored in additional "risks" not accounted for by PMCD that would cause delays and drive up the price tag. The group's timeline says that the Army will not finish destruction activities until fiscal year 2011 and that the effort will cost $24 billion.

Both PMCD's and the Improvement Group's estimates do not address two of the nine U.S. chemical weapons destruction facilities—those at Pueblo, Colorado, and Blue Grass, Kentucky. Estimates for those facilities were not completed because it has not yet been decided whether they will incinerate their chemical weapons, as has been planned for five U.S. facilities, or destroy them some other way, according to PMCD.

PMCD says that it will complete estimates for Pueblo by January and for Blue Grass by July, but internal PMCD documents indicate that destruction activities at Pueblo will not finish until late 2007 and that activities at Blue Grass will not wrap up until early 2012. The documents also show that the Improvement Group estimates that destruction operations could extend to 2013 at Pueblo and 2016 at Blue Grass, well past the 2012 CWC extension deadline.

According to the documents, the United States may also miss an April 2007 deadline to destroy a former chemical weapons production facility in Newport, Indiana, that is now being used to store chemical weapons. Possible delays in the weapons' destruction could postpone the facility's elimination beyond the treaty deadline.

The documents further say that the new U.S. schedule also "may require" an extension of an intermediate deadline to dispose of 45 percent of Category 1 chemical weapons (the highest "risk" category) by the end of April 2004.

The United States has destroyed 23 percent of its stockpile to date, most of which is composed of Category 1 weapons, according to PMCD.

PMCD's Mahall said that the Defense Department is considering giving financial bonuses to contractors and Army officials to accelerate the destruction process and perhaps beat PMCD's timeline.

| Location | PMCD Completion Date (Fiscal Year) | Improvement Group Completion Date (Fiscal Year) | Original Percentage of U.S. Stockpile |
|---|---|---|---|
| Aberdeen, Maryland | 2006 | 2008 | 5.2 percent |
| Anniston, Alabama | 2009 | 2011 | 7.2 percent |
| Blue Grass, Kentucky | Not Determined (estimated 2012) | Not Determined (estimated 2016) | 1.6 percent |
| Johnston Atoll | Completed | Completed | 6.4 percent |
| Newport, Indiana | 2007 | 2010 | 4.0 percent |
| Pine Bluff, Arkansas | 2008 | 2010 | 12.2 percent |
| Pueblo, Colorado | Not Determined (estimated 2007) | Not Determined (estimated 2013) | 8.3 percent |
| Tooele, Utah | 2005 | 2008 | 43.2 percent |
| Umatilla, Oregon | 2009 | 2011 | 11.8 percent |

*Note: Percentages have been rounded. Source: PMCD.*

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